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At Vienna two rooms of the Austrian Museum were rearranged, and plans made for the erection of a new building in 1915 to receive the collection of the Albertina.

In Italy one new museum has been proposed, a museum in honor of St. Francis at Assisi, and the provincial museum at Catanzaro is to be rearranged. Two more museums have opened their doors after extensive rearrangement, the municipal museum at Brindisi and the Royal National Museum at Cagliari.

One open-air museum, at Helsingfors on the Gulf of Finland, represents Russia's advance in new museums. A projected Handelsmuseum at Geneva is Switzerland's share in this museum activity.

#### THE MUSEUM OF EASTERN ASIATIC ART IN COLOGNE

NOTEWORTHY among the events of the last year in the museum world was the opening of the Museum of Eastern Asiatic Art in Cologne on October 25, 1913. To quote the words of Adolf Fischer,<sup>1</sup> the first director of this institution, "The city of Cologne, within whose venerable walls with all reverence for her great past a modern spirit dwells, has done some pioneering along the line of museum work by building a home especially for the great art of the people of the Far East. Only through a museum which is dedicated to the art of Eastern Asia could the importance of the art-product of the peoples of the Far East be fully expressed and comprehended by everyone. This art is the outcome of an advanced civilization a thousand years old; it needs no association with other civilizations to be understood, but it has developed through its own power. . . . The new institute in Cologne devoted to art has a great mission of culture to fulfil. It aims to illustrate the great art of the Far East for the first time in Europe — and, in truth, in a setting created especially for it — both the religious and the secular art in

their manifold expressions and their complete development."<sup>2</sup>

It would seem that so worthy an aim should have been carried out long ago. As Mr. Fischer says, "That the art of the great existing civilized peoples of Eastern Asia should begin so late to find a home in our art museums, while men had for a long time devoted themselves to all the details of the art of the Egyptians, the Assyrians, and the Babylonians, who belong to the past and have no future, will always remain a mystery."

The ignorance of the European in matters pertaining to Oriental art may be partly explained by a somewhat contemptuous attitude toward the people of the Orient. "Animated only by the desire to transmit to the people of the Far East the achievements of our culture and in this way to derive profit from them, we forgot in our pride to find out whether they also had not something of equal value to offer us."

But even with the most earnest desire to understand the great art of the East, the student often found his way blocked. The places that could give the greatest satisfaction to the inquirer, such as the imperial treasure-house at Nara, were inaccessible and the museums either did not exist or were in their infancy. So it was difficult to obtain an appreciation of the development of Eastern art. Whatever art was obtainable belonged largely to periods of decline, not to the most flourishing epochs.

Having gained possession of Eastern art, "the majority [of museum officials] were content with determining the provenance of the objects and their use, but the feeling for quality and style, especially for great art, as painting and sculpture, was not at all cultivated. This entire lack was a necessary consequence of the fact that we had almost no inkling of the development of this art, of the existence of a style. The first careful study in the Far East opened our eyes, sharpened our minds, and placed

<sup>1</sup> Adolf Fischer, by whose knowledge of Oriental art and conscientious service this museum was made possible, died on April 13, 1914.

<sup>2</sup> Das Museum für ostasiatische Kunst der Stadt Cöln. Museumskunde, Band X, Heft 2, pp. 71 ff. From this article all the facts here recorded are culled and all the quotations are taken.

us in a position to approach even works of great art, proving, weighing, criticizing."

The Museum of Eastern Asiatic Art in Cologne, the first museum in Europe built for and wholly devoted to the art of China, Korea, and Japan, contains the collection of Adolf Fischer, brought together during long years of independent travel for study in the farthest parts of Eastern Asia, during three years when he was a scientific expert for the German Empire at the embassy in Peking, and also during two more extended expeditions undertaken for the city of Cologne. Of this collection he says, "The collection placed on exhibition has been brought together by me as the stones for a building, to form a great whole. It was not my ambition to create a huge collection of Eastern Asiatic objects of art and so to hold the record for all European museums, but rather to assemble single works of art which are typical for the classes and periods represented." As he trenchantly adds, "It is not the thickest books that have the most valuable contents and afford the greatest enjoyment to the reader of exquisite taste."

The history of the museum goes back to the spring of 1909 when at a meeting of the city council it was unanimously voted to build a self-supporting museum of Eastern Asiatic art according to Mr. Fischer's plans. The decision of the council was reinforced by the founding of an association for the furtherance of the museum, the members of which pledged themselves to provide maintenance for the museum by yearly contributions.

The new Museum of Eastern Asiatic Art and the Museum of Industrial Arts (*Kunstgewerbemuseum*) form one group of buildings and the main entrance to the former is from a room of the latter. The two institutions are, however, entirely separate except in their location. Each has its own director, its own staff, its own plan of management.

Simplicity forms the keynote of the new building. For its distinction it depends on simple lines and harmonious proportions. While an Oriental style of architecture would have suggested the use of the building, it would have been in striking contrast

to its surroundings and also especially liable to injury from fire. In fact, the Japanese themselves have been so thoroughly convinced that their architecture is not suitable for a museum that they have adopted a European style for this purpose.

Within, the building has been kept equally simple, absolutely without adornment, on the principle that any conspicuous decoration or pretension to magnificence would divert the attention from the collection for which the building exists. The rooms are of small dimensions and moderate height, as befits the objects to be exhibited. They are so arranged that a visitor may see the entire collection without retracing his steps. Indeed, to save the visitor fatigue and annoyance was a constant aim in every detail of the building, and in the installation of the objects as well. One detail will illustrate the extent to which this thoughtfulness was carried. A wide projecting moulding placed under the sloping side of a case filled with sword guards is avowedly an arm rest, because detailed study of sword guards is wearisome.

That the best arrangement of the objects of art might be secured, the most convenient and attractive cases provided, and the most harmonious backgrounds used, experiments were conducted for over a year and a half. Different neutral shades were stretched on the walls, temporary cases were constructed from packing boxes, and the objects temporarily installed therein before the arrangement was made final. The installation is by no means uniform; each class of objects—in fact, each individual object—received separate consideration; appropriateness of setting, artistic effect, the enjoyment of the visitor, and the preservation of the object, by no means least in importance, entered into the problem. For example, in Room 1, devoted to Chinese stone and clay sculpture, a slab of black marble on a foundation wall of red brick forms a setting sufficiently rough to accord with the striking realism and the monumental character of the objects. In Room 13, containing objects in *cloisonné*, glass, ivory, and lacquer, the cases are very slender and

graceful to harmonize with the lightness of the objects. All the cases and pedestals are of wood, but mahogany, oak, cherry, and other woods have been employed in different rooms, as the material to be exhibited dictated.

The arrangement of the collections has been carried out along scientific lines adhering to an historical sequence, yet the rooms have been planned to give delight, to stimulate and satisfy the aesthetic taste; for the director believed that the school-master ought not to get the better of the artist. The art of China, the prevailing and most productive art in the circle of Oriental culture, has been first in the museum. As Korea provided a bridge for Chinese civilization to make its way into Japan, so the exhibit of Korean art is logically placed between the art of China and that of Japan; while Japan, the youngest of the three lands of Oriental culture, is fittingly last in the museum plan. Religious art, on which secular art is largely built, comes early in the order of the rooms. In those set apart for Buddhistic art, Japan, Korea, and China join hands; for the teachings of Buddha have united the art of all three lands in one spirit. In these rooms, also, sculpture and painting have been combined, because they were found in harmonious association in the temples from the earliest times and together affected the mood of the worshipers.

These rooms of Buddhistic art would have offered an excellent opportunity to follow the custom of several carefully planned museums and reproduce an Oriental temple interior, had that been Mr. Fischer's desire. His position on this pertinent question is worth quoting, "I have intentionally avoided bringing into the Buddhist rooms things that would accord with temple interiors in the Far East, for I considered that such a beginning would be a mistake. Works of art ought to produce an effect as such, and visitors ought to concentrate their entire attention on them. The works of a Ra-

phael or of other masters of the Italian Renaissance, which were originally intended for churches, produce an effect by their inherent excellence when they are separated from their surroundings."

The museum does contain, however, three original Japanese rooms, made by Japanese carpenters, working according to the old traditions. These serve as settings for the works of art and illustrate how the great works of decorative art are actually placed in a room in Japan.

The secular art, which begins with the eighth room, is arranged according to material, so that one may trace in one room or adjoining rooms the development of style in one medium through the principal periods. For example, the collection of Chinese ceramics gives a survey over the entire development from the grave furniture of the Han Dynasty (206 B. C. - 220 A. D.), with its charming iridescent patina, through all the important epochs even to the early part of the nineteenth century. A few striking types of each kind are exhibited.

Sometimes works that have a kinship in spirit, though carried out in two mediums, are shown in the same room. So the black and white paintings of Japan, which avoid all pronounced effects, are placed with the chaste, delicately glazed cups and jars for the tea ceremony, so valued by the Japanese that they are carefully wrapped in costly silk cloths and preserved as heirlooms from generation to generation.

Bronzes and jades; lacquers, cloisonné, and ivories; masks for Nō-plays and religious dances; color prints; netsukés and inrō; sword guards and other sword fittings; costly brocades and the costumes of mandarins and noble ladies — these are some of the treasures that greet the eye as one continues through the rooms of the Museum of Eastern Asiatic Art; and each has received the same careful treatment, designed to produce the most artistic effect, to give the visitor the least fatigue and the greatest pleasure.

W. E. H.